

Marian Bailey, "Miss Pentagon" dies after 59 years of service in the Pentagon



Marian Bailey paused for a snapshot during her early years in the Pentagon.

Marian Bailey, 79, who began her career with the Pentagon when it opened in April of 1942 and remained on staff for nearly 60 years, died Jan. 22 at her home in Riverdale, Md., after a heart attack. She was said to have been the last of the Pentagon's original staff continuing to serve. The duration of her career combined with her knowledge and affection of the building earned her the title of "Miss Pentagon."

"The Pentagon is like family to me," Ms. Bailey said in an interview early last year. "It is a part of me and will always occupy a soft spot in my heart."

In recent years, Ms. Bailey's duties have consisted primarily of escorting VIPs on tours through the Pentagon. She was seen frequently on her own personalized golf cart equipped with flags, lights, three horns and two car batteries. "I've invested \$5,000 in my baby," boasted Ms. Bailey. "I accommodate many important people and I can't afford a breakdown."

Ms. Bailey began her career as a switchboard operator and eventually moved up the ranks to be the chief telephone operator. "I was in charge of more than 300 gals," she said. "They were the most dedicated people you could hope to work with." One particular event involving her team stood out in Ms. Bailey's mind. "Dur-

ing the war [WWII], the full-time operation of the switchboard was critical," she said. "I and a group of my girls slept in the Pentagon for two weeks straight to keep the switchboard running smoothly. I'm not sure you'll find that kind of dedication today."

Ms. Bailey also never hesitated to voice her opinion about modern technology. "When we ran the switchboard, anyone calling the Pentagon always found a pleasant voice on the other end of the line," she said proudly. "Today, you get recorded voices and beeps. That's not my idea of progress."

Despite her disapproval of some of the changes she had seen take place over the last 59 years, Ms. Bailey's pride in the Pentagon never wavered. "The Pentagon is a special place," she said. "Always has been, always will be."



Marian Bailey, center, was seen quite frequently surrounded by some of the many friends she made during her 59 years of service in the Pentagon.

Pentagon celebrated 58th Anniversary in January 2001

On January 15, 1943, the last of 15,000 construction workers and more than 400 architects and engineers left the grounds of the Pentagon reservation as the 34-acre home to our Nation's military establishment was completed. No dedication ceremony was held due to the pressures of wartime.

In actuality, the first personnel began occupying the Pentagon in April of 1942, just eight months after construction began.

In the fall of 1942, the Secretary of Defense moved into his office along the River Terrace and by December 1942, 22,000 employees occupied the Pentagon.

The final cost for the Pentagon was \$49.6 million for the structure and \$33.4 million for ancillary facilities and 30 miles of roads, access ramps and bridges.



The Pentagon was constructed in just 16 months, from September 1941 to January 1943, as 15,000 workers labored in three shifts around the clock. The structure is constructed almost entirely of reinforced concrete as steel was preserved for the war effort.



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